Diversity Includes Disability: Notes on Raising a Biracial Kid with DS  
by Yvonne Hu-Cotto

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DID YOU KNOW?

1. Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal condition (1 in 700 live births in the U.S)?
2. IDEA has only been around for 40 years?
3. The life expectancy for people with DS today is 60 years?
4. There are inclusive college programs for people with Intellectual Disabilities?
5. People with ID are expected to be employed through competitive means?
6. More and more, people with DS wish to go to college, work, and live on their own?

COMMON CHALLENGES IN DS

* Higher Incidence of medical issues & dual diagnoses
* Low muscle tone
  + Gross & Fine motor skills
  + Potty training
  + Speech intelligibility
* Intellectual disability
  + Gaps in skills & knowledge
  + Needs time to process & respond
  + Adaptive behaviors
* High receptive language skills VS. low expressive language skills

COMMON STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DS

* Early intervention
* Technology
* Visual support
* Provide meaning to experiences
* High expectations from everyone
* Consistency & repetition
* Inclusion

WORKING WITH FAMILIES WITH DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

* Families may expect the school/teacher to tell them what to do.
* Share & explain the next steps in the IEP process to the new family – what needs to be said.
* Encourage family to be involved in school in other ways.
* Ask the family to share useful, on-going updates about the child – Instagram, weekend activities, etc.
* Share community resources with family

HELPFUL THINGS FROM TEACHERS

* Inclusion takes work! It takes intentional efforts to get the children to have meaningful interactions.
* The students learn from you about how to behave with the student with special needs.
  + Don’t coddle the student. Hold him/her accountable
* Talk about student’s strength as well as challenges
* Use student’s background to connect to curriculum (Luis’s travel experience tied to science & social studies)
* Communication book – include both small successes and challenges from each day.
  + Include strategies that have worked for you.
  + Ask for feedback/suggestions from family about challenges
* Work to promote independence (as much as possible)
  + Visual schedule, A briefcase for math/LAS, A reward system

HELPFUL THINGS FROM SCHOOL

* NO ugly school pictures!
* Include students with disabilities in the year book
* Interactions on the bus, during recess & lunch time are big concerns!
* Promote independence (as much as possible)! – work with different staff members, walk the hallways or pack/unpack book bag independently, etc.
* Acknowledge disability awareness days/week/month
* Form school teams for community events (Autism or DS walk)

FINALLY, KNOW THAT YOU ARE POWERFUL!

* Know how your school system works.
* Know the laws (IDEA, COMAR) – LRE, FAPE.
* Know the purpose of your lesson plan.
* Ask for support from the central office.
* Families trust you as the experts in instructional strategies and content areas.
* Yet we expect you to recognize our children as unique individuals with distinct strengths and weaknesses who can contribute to your classroom.